

Tips for PDF Files in Grants.Gov Applications

- PDF is a standard format for sharing data, and it is possible to convert many common file formats (Microsoft Word, Corel WordPerfect, etc.) to PDF using a wide variety of PDF-creating applications (sometimes called distillers). In fact, PDF conversion is built into Microsoft Office 2007. Some third-party PDF converters are free, many are quite inexpensive -- and some are better than others. If you use one of these applications, be sure to test the results -- ensure that you and others can open and view the resulting PDF files using the Adobe Reader software. On the NEH website there is a list with links to some PDF-creating applications:

<http://www.neh.gov/grants/grantsgov/pdf.html>

- If you scan something to create a PDF file, do not scan it at higher resolution than you need. Typically, NEH applications are read online by reviewers and panelists, so an image scanned at 100 dpi (dots or pixels per inch) will display very clearly on a computer monitor. An image scanned at higher resolution (300+ dpi) will result in a very large file, and it will usually not result in a better-quality display when viewed on a monitor. In addition, these large files may cause problems for viewing or downloading your application. This is as true of photographs, drawings, and blueprints as it is of letters, résumés, etc. In short, avoid high resolutions when scanning anything in order to turn it into PDF.
- If you scan text -- e.g. a letter or résumé or curriculum vitae -- do not scan it as an image, even a relatively low-resolution image. Text should be scanned as text, using an optical character recognition (OCR) application, because text data is much more compact than image data. Additionally, scanning text with OCR software allows you to edit the text after it has been scanned. This cannot be done if you scan the text and save it as an image.
- If you convert images to PDF (photographs, architectural drawings, maps, etc.), make sure that they are not larger than they need to be. As mentioned above, applications are usually read online, so there is no need for your images to be much larger than will display in a computer monitor. And large images may cause problems for viewing or downloading your application. If your image must be seen at very high resolution, it may be a good idea to make it available on your website and embed a link to it in a PDF file, rather than including it in your application (see the next bulleted item).
- If you need to include large media files in your application -- high-resolution images, video or sound files, or splashy multi-color reports -- you should consider embedding links to these resources in your PDF files rather than including them in your application. Of course this means that those resources must be accessible via the web -- on your website or in some other place that can be reached with a web browser. Your PDF file would then contain links to these resources rather than the

resources themselves. Since the applications are typically reviewed online, the resources will be easily accessible to reviewers and panelists as they read your application.

- The software you need to view and print PDF files (Adobe Acrobat Reader) is freely available, but not everyone has the most recent version of this software. And the PDF standard has evolved in the past several years -- new features are added with each version. Remember these facts when you create PDF files. Do not create PDF files that can only be read with the most recent version(s) of the free Acrobat Reader. The better PDF-creating applications allow you to specify the version of PDF that the software will produce. The current version is 1.6 (supported by Acrobat Reader 6.x and higher). Since many people are still using older versions of Acrobat Reader, you should probably aim for an older version of the PDF standard (1.4 or 1.3) -- this will ensure that your files can be viewed even in older versions of the Acrobat Reader.
- Do not include any security or encryption in your PDF files. Make sure that the files are not read-only and that they are not password-protected.
- Do not include attachments within your PDF files. This is a feature added to the PDF standard as of version 1.6, and it allows you to include or attach child PDF files within a parent file. This may be a convenient way of bundling files, but the PDF files you include in your application cannot themselves contain attachments.